



Christianity and Crisis

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What Has Come Over Us?

NO serious-minded person can contemplate without dismay the disordered state of public opinion in America. To a true liberal the present is surely a "time of troubles." By "liberal" we mean, of course, one who is disposed to trust public intelligence and goodwill to solve political and social problems through free discussion. It doesn't seem to be working out that way. At this moment liberals of all parties and faiths are experiencing grievous frustration. To add a touch of irony to the situation, the very word "liberal" is being used as a term of opprobrium.

The symptoms of our malady are patent. The pride of America has been her system of public education, but now our schools are frequently held to be suspect. Our churches, long considered to have carried conservatism to extremes, are accused of harboring subversives. What used to be a commonplace American doctrine—freedom of speech, press, and association—brings suspicion upon those who vigorously advocate it.

Consider the terror that broke loose in Los Angeles in 1952 over the study of UNESCO in the public schools—a really frightened spectacle. Or take a look at Norwalk, Conn., where the highly respectable Veterans of Foreign Wars have permitted themselves to engage in a novel type of vigilantism—not to track down Communists, but, as recently stated in the *New York Times*, to put the finger on persons "suspected of having an interest in activities not related to a strong America." This elaborate verbiage sets a trap into which any Christian pacifist would easily fall and any citizen temporarily denied general approval might easily be pushed. As the Kansas City *Star* said of the Norwalk scheme, "This free-wheeling approach to the serious problem of identifying and keeping track of Reds could easily get out of hand."

"Incredible" is the word we find ourselves using when such goings on are reported. But ejaculation will get us nowhere. A popular columnist of a generation ago once discoursed on the "god-sakers"—

people who are always impotently crying, "For God's sake!" over things that are very wrong. Pronouncing something incredible does not make it less likely to happen.

There is real danger that liberals, who are in the very nature of the case the guardians of democratic process, may in this emergency become ineffectual because of a basic error. That error is the assumption that civilized beings have a rational bent that is bound to assert itself if the problem is correctly stated. We have no such assurance.

A curious contradiction appears in contemporary social philosophy. On the one hand we find a tendency to draw heavily on analytic psychology in one or another of its forms and thus to emphasize the role of the irrational in human behavior. On the other hand, we continually hear scholars denouncing the "retreat from reason," as if man in his normal state were a *predominantly* rational being. Oddly enough, pragmatic thinkers, who make much of "instrumentalism" seem to have been slow to recognize that intelligence is itself instrumental to ends that rest more on value affirmations than on rational propositions. This should be a commonplace with all religious persons who affirm the primacy of faith, as it is with the depth psychologists who explore the dynamism of the unconscious.

What has come over us in America is an altogether understandable, even though startling, phenomenon: our thinking has come to be dominated by fear, at times by stark terror. We are, of course, not all afraid of the same things. Some of us are under the spell of the terrible atom, though people in general seem to be taking that in stride. The potential disruption of life and thwarting of hopes that are implicit in the threat of war cloud everybody's horizon, especially that of the young. The great depression bequeathed to the entire population a chronic susceptibility to economic jitters. And—most influential of all, perhaps—the sudden awareness of revolution throughout a great part of the world has struck terror into the hearts of those who have substantial material possessions.

This last factor probably accounts in great part for the unreasoning attitude of large numbers of people toward the "red" threat. That it is terribly real *externally* everybody knows. That it was extensive at one time in the form of internal spy activity, may be granted, but only extremists suppose that communism is a serious domestic threat today. That is not the point at all. The point is that a growing sense of insecurity with reference to property and property rights leads people to lump communists, socialists, New Dealers, and Fair Dealers together and call them all a bad lot. The current mood has no place for rational distinctions. For example, a journal that circulates widely among ministers now calls for the repeal of the income tax laws in order to save the economic order.

Much of the debate over the Bricker Amendment is also largely emotional. That there is a real issue here for constitutional lawyers to grapple with—without benefit of partisan politics—can hardly be questioned. American history discloses a precarious balance between the several "powers" of government. But the heated discussion now going on shows that much of it is motivated by a restless desire to combat "internationalism," which has now become one of the "bad" words. It involves the UN, and the Soviet Union is in the UN, and therefore the latter is a corrupting influence, and we had better stay in our own back yard.

None of this should astonish us. The theological controversies with which most of us are familiar have a similar character. When people begin to tremble lest the foundations be destroyed they cease making nice distinctions: only an unquestioning acceptance of tradition will do. The pattern should be clear enough. It doesn't *have* to make sense. In a time of insecurity and fear reason is a luxury, and liberty becomes a rationed commodity. We have to address ourselves to a restoration of confidence if we would achieve popular amenability to reason.

Walter Lippmann has suggested that the election of President Eisenhower reflected chiefly a popular longing to have done with tension and preoccupation with crisis. "It had become imperative," he says, "that this country collect itself, that it consolidate itself, that it restore its confidence in itself, that it find a way to quiet its frayed nerves, to allay its suspicions, and that it regain its composure and its equanimity." Very likely he is right, but the goal is still remote.

This does not mean that attempts at rational discussion are useless. Indeed, it appears that the role of discussion in the democratic process has been

mis-appraised. In no small part the value of free discussion in highly controversial areas is indirect and but little related to the market-place of ideas. It is an emotional safety-valve. It sluices off energy, reduces tension, and keeps open the channels of social intercourse until such time as the balance of interests and purposes is sufficiently restored to admit of the application of collective intelligence to the pursuit of commonly accepted ends.

In politics, as in theology and ecclesiastical affairs, the sharpest controversies are, in the end, not so much resolved as outmoded. They are symbolic of strains and dislocations in the realm of values whose remedy is more spiritual than rational. Today people are asking the wrong questions and therefore are getting the wrong answers. True enough, America needs a return to reason, but her primary need is to check the shrinking of the national soul.

F. E. J.

Editorial Notes

The failure of the four power Foreign Ministers Conference has surprised no one who had no illusions; and it may have instructed those who had illusions. It was called, it will be remembered, at Mr. Churchill's insistence. The fact that only the foreign ministers, and not the prime ministers, were asked to meet was interpreted by the Bevanites in England as a capitulation of Churchill to America.

The Russians were willing to confer because they had a splendid opportunity to widen the rift between America and France, the latter being hesitant about the European Defense Community; and to seduce some Germans, chiefly socialists and those Protestants who follow Niemoeller's leadership and who had imagined that it would be possible to create a neutralized Germany instead of a divided Germany with one part integrated into the Western defense community. The Russians, instead of succeeding in this enterprise, have tightened the bonds between us and France and have prompted a protest against their plans by even the German socialists.

The reason for this turn of events can be simply stated. We offered to unify Germany, provided the unification would take place under the authority of a united German government brought to power by free elections, supervised by the occupying powers and neutral nations. Our willingness to trust such elections proved our confidence in the prestige which western democracy had gained through the success of the western German regime. The Russians, on the other hand, could not afford to entrust their cause

to such elections. Their counter-proposal was elections under the auspices of the two German governments which would take precautions to prevent "Monopolists, Militarists, and Fascists" from influencing the results. As Secretary Dulles pointed out, in the lexicon of Communism this simply meant the suppression of all classes opposed to communism. In short, the Russians wanted their captive Eastern regime built into the united German government. All of Europe knew what that meant and all non-communist parties united in rejecting the proposal.

Some may ask why the Russians were so stupid as to destroy a golden opportunity. The answer is that they may be stupid but not that stupid. They

are merely caught in the consequences of their system. They know how unpopular their tyrannical regime in Eastern Germany is. On June 17th, it would have been overthrown if not supported by Russian tanks. Tyranny is too unpopular to risk its cause in free elections. That fact will continue to favor our side even if we commit some serious errors.

One hopes that the lessons of the Berlin Conference will penetrate the illusions of Pastor Niemoeller and his followers who have been engaged in some very fantastic political speculations prompted by the hatred of a Catholic regime at Bonn and presumably sanctified by Protestant theology.

R. N.

The Religious Quest of Modern India

M. M. THOMAS

A British Government Report of more than a generation ago said, "The pathetic contentment of the masses is not the soil on which Indian nationhood will grow, and in deliberately disturbing it, we are working for her highest good."¹ It is a debatable question whether there was this amount of deliberate moral direction in it all, but it is an undeniable fact that the result of Western impact, political, economic, and cultural has been to disturb the age-old "pathetic contentment of the masses of India." The masses have certainly been awakened. The struggle for, and the attainment of national freedom are an expression of this awakening. But it is much more than political in character. The old "pathetic contentment" was based on a certain social and economic as well as religious and cultural framework; and the new discontent therefore envelops the whole of the life of man in society. The structures of family, caste, neighborhood and village, and along with them the realm of moral ideas and religious convictions, within which men felt secure in their "contentment," are exploding. For instance, it was *karma* that made a man an untouchable, but "fundamental rights" in the current slogan and the so-called outcaste can drag a Brahmin to court for any practice of untouchability. Or poverty was "fate," but now the people know that there is nothing inevitable about it. The revolutionary ferment is a total one. It is the emergence of a whole people into "history" and the awakening of their urge to individual freedom, social dignity and national destiny.

Is it for India's "highest good?" It is. But the prospect of today's ferment realizing this "good"

depends upon the people's interpretation of the source and fulfillment of goodness in the revolutionary ferment. Here lies the religious problem—with cultural as well as political implications. The best representatives of British imperialism and Indian nationalism who sowed the seed of the ferment of discontent and nursed its growth, had such faith in the redemptive power of history that they considered the "highest good" a matter of automatic achievement. Jai Prakash Narain, the socialist leader, complains of the "university educated person" that "the constructive part of revolution, the creation of a new civilization, appears to him to be a simple process of automatic development, once the destructive part has been accomplished" and calls for "some awareness of the stupendous problem involved."² It is evident today to all who have open eyes, that the new cause of dignity and historical mission is a source not only of creative achievement, but also of destructive possibilities; and the question whether the creative quality will dominate the scene depends upon the adequacy of the understanding of man and the mystery of his freedom which guides Indian democracy. Such an understanding is essential for its short-term political job of containing the forces of destruction without destroying the source of creative dynamism as well as of giving scope to the dynamic creative forces of change without letting the totalitarian forces inherent in them get into control. It is also essential for the long-term task of developing a new cultural soil in which a democratic political wisdom which sees realistically man's capacity for justice and his tendency towards injustice, can find its roots and nourishment. In this light, it

¹ Montagu-Chelmsford Report.

² Foreword to "Democratic Socialism" by A. Mehta.

can be affirmed that India's search for democracy is related integrally to its religious quest. Everywhere, one hears the question: What is man, his nature, and his destiny?

Secularism: Its Positive Values

The religious problem of democracy can best be explained in relation to the concept of secularism in India today. (We might equally start with the concept of individualism, or rationalism, but I think the secular concept is a more fruitful starting-point; and, in any case, they are all linked together closely.) Secularism has been and still is one of the most dynamic and creative concepts in India. For one thing, because it shakes the Indian peoples from their concept of "spirituality" which regards the world and its history with indifference as a meaningless cycle of endless repetitions, and brings them a sense of purposeful history. This secularism is basic to the historical dynamism that undergirds the idea of responsible democratic living. Secondly, because it liberates the human person. One of the essential requirements of democracy is the emergence of the individual conscious of his duty to follow his reason and conscience, and in this connection, of his "inalienable" rights over against the communal groups of which he is a part. In ancient India, the individual was very much a part of the structures of collective existence rooted in traditions, customs, and sanctified by religion. A process of secularization of life at different levels is imperative to break the religious sanctities of traditional collectivism and to "liberate" the submerged individual. Secularism in India stands for the freedom and dignity of the individual. Thirdly, because secularism is the basis of a relativism, without which politics cannot be redeemed of its fanaticism. The faith that there is no political means or end which can be called final or sacred, is necessary to avoid political movements that claim to be holy crusades and to bring politics to the level of the relative and make it a matter of discussion. Without this, no multi-party system of politics can ever work because no opposition will be tolerated. Secularism thus is the framework within which pragmatic politics can take root in India. Fourthly, secularism in India today is the basis of the State's concern for justice for man conceived as a citizen, irrespective of his religious creed. The narrow Hindu (or Muslim) "communal" approach which aims at the establishment of a theocratic state will necessarily create religious discrimination between citizens. Over against this religious communal approach to politics, the secular approach thinks in terms of the fundamental rights of every citizen as a human person. Fifthly, the idea of the secular state stands for the separation of partisan, religious, communal interest from the state, so necessary for

the guaranteeing of the full liberty of the citizen to "preach, practice and propagate" his religion, and more especially the right of religious conversion. The advocates of the Hindu (or Islamic) state always consider making "conversion a crime."

It is evident that the fight for the "secular" state in India today is a fight for social responsibility, emancipation of the individual pragmatic politics, universal human rights and religious freedom—in a word—for everything that is basic to democracy. Anyone who lightly seeks to destroy secularism in India in the name of any religion is not a friend but a foe of responsible personal and social existence.

Exhausted Secularism

The problem, however, only begins here. If the concept of secularism is a necessary basis of democratic values, it has no strength to recreate its original dynamic character, and in the long run saps the vitality of these values. The "long run" is not too long either. The West kept the vitality of secularism alive for four centuries, but in India as in other parts of Asia, emerging as it does in the declining period of the West, it is emptied of its sustaining power even as it brings to birth democratic institutions and values.

One need not review the story of the dialectic of secularism familiar to the readers of this journal; the deification of history emptying history of orientation and making life burdensome; the emancipated individual, lonely and homeless, expressing himself in an irresponsible individualism and longing to end his unsubstantial freedom; relativism giving way to scepticism and apathy; religious neutrality working itself out as an oppressive atheism, and so on.

The best among the leaders of Indian nationalism and democracy are alive to this problem. They have seen quite a few of their erstwhile comrades in the fight for national freedom and democracy pass through this experience of an exhausted secularism and giving up the struggle for democracy. Many such have ended in the camp of the Hindu (or Muslim) nationalism that seeks to absorb Western science and technique without a secular democratic revolution in the ancient feudal ways of India. Many have accepted the politics of totalitarian communism which promises to satisfy man's longing for bread and communion on the basis of a re-submergence of the individual in a new super-feudal collectivism. Others, like the noble Socialist leader Achyut Patwardham, frightened by the above alternatives into which the historical dynamism eventually drives the democrat, have left the field of politics to find mystical ways of solving the problem of social existence. But the real religious quest of modern India is expressed not by those who have left the struggle for democratic politics and its supporting culture,

but by those who seek a new way of revitalization of secular democracy and its values; I mean the liberals, Gandhiites and the Socialists who, deeply aware of the cultural crisis in which secularism stands, are nevertheless looking for what Dr. Radhakrishnan has called a "secularity that is spiritual." It is necessary at this point to look at some of the representative thinking of the modern politicians of India who struggle with this perennial problem of responsible existence in history.

The Moral Law

One of the most significant attempts at preventing the tide of spiritual exhaustion of India's secular democratic revolution came from Mahatma Gandhi; and he sought to do it by emphasizing the eternal moral law. He re-defined democracy within the framework of the laws of morality—*satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence), and *swadeshi* (love of the neighborhood). I know of no attempt in the modern period either in the West or the East, so grand in its conception, to reinforce the democratic political movement with moral resources. Gandhism is the counterpart in India of Neo-Thomism in the West; and Gandhism is attractive for the same reasons as Thomist Natural Law; only Gandhi was more existential in approach and therefore less logical. Recently, the American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles spoke of the moral law as the basis of American politics and an international controversy arose with Attlee and Nehru pointing out the inadequacy and perils of that approach. On that score, *Time* spoke of the critics of Dulles as those "soaked in the politics of expediency" and therefore not sufficiently moral. This was the same comment that Gandhi made in the twenties regarding the British principle of expediency; he was sure that if India followed this immoral principle "she would be ruined." This is by the way.

In the present discussion³ on the relevance of the moral law to international politics, I feel that one is facing the same kind of issues Gandhism constantly raised in relation to Indian politics. Certainly the eternal moral law and the idea of moral responsibility seem to many to afford the promise of overcoming the tendencies towards irresponsibility in individualism and relativism and of transcending the lack of orientation of secular democracy without destroying the values they stand for. There is no doubt that in India itself it has nerved the nationalist a great deal to face the spiritual hazards of furthering democratic struggle at the time of its general spiritual decline. It is in no small measure due to the creativity of the Gandhian approach that the transfer of British power to Indian hands was peace-

³ See a summing up by Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Christian Century*.

ful (this in no way lessens the credit due to the British political wisdom) and that the Hindu-Muslim killings on the eve of independence was not more widespread than it was. Gandhi's "intuition" saved him from the logic of his moral legalism and kept it dynamic until the end of his life.

The position of orthodox Gandhism in Free India, however, is a clear illustration of the incapacity of a moralistic approach to comprehend the dynamic social and moral forces of the present revolutionary ferment. In looking for the objectively fixed eternal patterns and norms of the divine moral order, Gandhism fails to do justice on the one hand to the deeper dimensions of the relation between means and ends in politics, and on the other to the human possibilities of technology. No doubt, the moral problems of power and technics to which Gandhism has called attention, can be neglected by any democracy only at its peril, especially in revolutionary times. But the legalism which infects a philosophy of man's inherent "moral nature" seems to become blind to the following facts: that the historical source of good and evil is the same; that the same forces of power-politics and technics which dehumanize are those that are potentially capable of becoming the tools of and in any case in the modern world a necessary instrument of true humanism; that no law however it may claim to be eternal can prevent being made a mask for self-interest and self-righteousness, and fail to strengthen ultimate lawlessness. These, only a higher wisdom can see. Gandhism does not possess it. This is not to say as many have been saying, in this country, that Gandhism is dead in Indian politics. Nothing is further from the truth. In Vinoba Bhave and others, even orthodox Gandhism, within limits, remains creative as a means of attacking the problem of land-tenure and caste. And as for other democrats, whenever their consistent secular relativism becomes unendurable to their spirit and threatens to break down, they fly into the security of the Gandhian moral law. For the time being, it saves them and keeps them in the arena of democratic politics in the revolutionary Indian situation which demands a realistic positive appraisal of the essentially new moral and social dynamics inherent in it. (They reject dogmatic Marxism also for the same reason,⁴ for its fixed pattern of historical development leads to the betrayal of the deeper moral and social dimensions of the revolutionary ferment.) So the democrats are thrown, over and over again, back to faith in secularism as the only basis for democratic politics. Hence the illogical character of Pandit Nehru moving to and fro between a consistent secularism and Gandhian moralism. One has the feeling that he is more creative and realistic when he speaks as

⁴ R. Lonia's presidential address at the P.S.P. Special Convention, Pachmarhi, 1952.

a tamed and humble secularist than when he speaks as a Gandhiite. Hence also the incoherence of the ideas of democratic socialists unsuccessfully struggling to find a way out of the spiritual and political deadlock created by the crisis of liberal and dogmatic Marxism through a re-definition of Gandhian moralism.

Towards a Secularity That Is Spiritual

This search of Indian democracy for an eternal moral anchor which at the same time does justice to the positive values and insights of secularism, is exemplified, at its best, by the leaders of Indian socialism. Speaking at the Socialist Congress at Madras,⁵ Asoka Mehta now the General Secretary of the Praja Socialist Party said: "There are undoubtedly aspects of the ethics that are relative, but man's deepest responses are to the absolute ethic, that nostalgia of life's ultimate triumph over all limitations. It is man's nature to live simultaneously in temporal truths and eternal verities. Socialism has mighty power because in it inheres the amphibious nature of man." What is this absolute morality? It is the "achievement of self-harmony and acceptance of the rights and reality of other men"—"recognized as the final fruits of all efforts, the end of all quests." Mehta continues: "The absolute morality provides the touchstone to judge and improve the historically conditioned morality. To deny validity to absolute ethics is to rob the ship at sea of its compass." In conceiving the "achievement of self-harmony and acceptance of the rights and reality of other men" as the final judge and end of all quests, Mehta has come near to saying that love is the fulfillment of all law. In any case, with his understanding of the "amphibious nature" of man and morality and of an ultimate ethic transcending a static structure of moral existence, and at the same time supporting the ambiguous moral responses to the problems of historical political existence, Mehta seems to me to touch the problem of human self-transcendence on a profound plane. Whether he and others like him will go forward to "see" the fuller religious implications of these ideas, is another question.

It is here that the most earnest religious quest of modern India lies; it may provide an effective "point of contact" for the gospel in India today. The Lucknow Ecumenical Study Conference last year said, "In the collapse and disintegration of the cultural patterns of the countries of East Asia, the Christian Church has a task to provide a principle of redefinition which makes possible the re-integration and development of a cultural basis conducive to responsible living. In this connection, the Christian understanding of man has great relevance to East

⁵ Report of the Eighth Conference of the Socialist Party, Madras, 1950.

Asia."⁶ In closing, let us also note the following warning in relation to this task. "We must not delude ourselves into thinking that we know all the answers. For we too share in the same perplexities that confront all men in this confused generation. There is a solidarity in all this common struggle in the quest for the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one who has not himself gone through it knows the agony of doubt and distress which is the portion of those grappling with the problems of life in the modern world. Only he would know what it is to be met by the Christ who too is himself in the very thick of it. Such a Christian alone can understand the Gospel for today and can claim the right to bring others to Him."⁷

⁶ Conference Report on Responsible Society in East Asia.

⁷ From "Communism and The Social Revolution in India," a Christian interpretation.

CHURCH NEWS AND NOTES

(A re-print of Thomas F. Brady's article in a recent issue of *The New York Times*, follows.)

Worker Priests Curbed in France

Paris, Jan. 25.—The Roman Catholic Bishops of France defined today the terms of a compromise ending the prolonged controversy aroused by Vatican disapproval of the "worker priest." For ten years these priests have tried to evangelize the overwhelmingly anticlerical industrial workers of this country.

The order, made public in a communique issued by the secretariat of the French episcopate, will limit the temporal activities and emphasize the priestly status of the nearly 100 "apostles to the proletariat" who wear overalls and work in factories.

The directive forbids the priests to hold full-time jobs and orders them "to renounce all temporal commitments." This means they can no longer belong to labor unions or participate in labor politics.

Reflection of Regret

The communique appeared to reflect some of the regret with which a part of the French church, historically known for its Gallic independence, has bowed to the will of the Holy See.

"The bishops," the communique said, "ask the clergy and the faithful to pray for the priests who, having committed themselves, little by little to a form of life and activity that cannot continue, are assuredly suffering because of these directives. More than ever in these painful hours they need the prayers of everyone."

Name Is Changed

The directive issued by the bishops also ordered, reportedly, at the express desire of the Pope, that the term "worker priests," should be abandoned and that they should call themselves instead "priests of the mission to the workers."

An authoritative ecclesiastical source said that the

directive meant the priests could not work more than half a day and that if an employer did not want part-time labor they would have to leave their factory jobs altogether.

The Paris newspaper *Le Monde* commented that French working men may see in the half-time jobs "a special privilege" and will no longer regard the priests as their true comrades.

The worker priest movement was begun here in 1943 in an effort to carry religion to the French proletariat which had been deeply influenced by Marxist doctrines. Disapproval of the mission by Rome and by the conservative elements of the French hierarchy was aroused because some of the priests succumbed to the very influences they were meant to combat.

Russian Orthodox Church Confers Honorary Degree on Metropolitan Nicholas

The General Synod of the Hungarian Reformed Church last October discussed and solemnly adopted the proposal, submitted through the General Convent by the Faculty of the Debrecen Theological Academy, to confer the honorary theological doctor's degree of the Hungarian Reformed Church upon Nicholas, the Metropolitan of Krutizy and Kolomna, head of the Inter-Church Department of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, honorary doctor of the theological faculties of Prague and Sofia. The preamble of the resolution paid tribute to the outstanding merits of Metropolitan Nicholas and stressed the ecumenical significance of his promotion by the Reformed Church of Hungary.

The ceremony of the Metropolitan's promotion took place on the 25th of January in Debrecen where the Metropolitan, according to the traditional customs of the Hungarian Reformed Church, received the honorary doctor's diploma offered to him. In the course of the solemn meeting of the Debrecen Theological Faculty the Metropolitan delivered his inaugural lecture on "The Question of War and Peace in the Light of Christian Truth." The celebration in Debrecen was attended by the bishops and lay leaders of the Reformed and of the other Protestant Churches, the leaders of the Hungarian Orthodox Churches, the professors of the Debrecen and Budapest Theological Academies and also by the delegates of all presbyteries of the Hungarian Reformed Church. The Metropolitan addressed the Protestant pastors in Debrecen and Budapest on the theme "Church Life in the Soviet Union." He visited the Theological Academies of Debrecen and Budapest and lectured on the training of priests in the Soviet Union. In both cities he spoke, in the course of church concerts, on the theme "The Church and the Fight for Peace."

The Bishop of Chichester and Visser 't Hooft Arrive in Hungary

The Right Rev. George Kennedy Allen Bell, Bishop of Chichester and Chairman of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, with his wife, and Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, arrived in Hungary on the 6th of February as guests of honor of the Hungarian

Reformed Church. The Bishop and the General Secretary attended a two-days' study conference of the Hungarian Ecumenical Committee which dealt with the themes of the Evanston Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Both the Bishop and Dr. Visser 't Hooft preached in the Calvin Square Reformed Church and in the Deak Square Lutheran Church of the capital and in the "Great Church" of Debrecen.

Hromadka in Hungary

Professor J. L. Hromadka, the Dean of the Comenius Faculty of Prague, honorary doctor of the Debrecen Theological Academy of Hungary, arrived, with Mrs. Hromadka, in Hungary at the end of January. Prof. Hromadka attended the celebrations and ecumenical conferences of the Hungarian Reformed Church.

Correspondence

Dear Sir:

It seems the general opinion of magazine and newspaper editors that the President's sliding scale farm program is a good one. This is true even of some of the so-called "liberal" organs of opinion. Indeed, Dr. Niebuhr describes the Eisenhower farm program as "a cogent step for the prevention of a built-in inflation into our economy."

It appears that the fact that almost all these publications are edited by people whose closest approach to the farm is the A & P supermarket has something to do with their analysis of the farm situation.

Now, what do the farmers and those of us who are supported by farmers complain about?

1. It seems silly to set in motion anti-inflationary measures in the very moment when there is good reason to believe that we have more cause to fear a deflation than a continued inflation. (Unemployment among farm-equipment workers, a direct result of falling farm-prices is already a source of real concern.)

2. It seems illogical to single out the farmer for such belated experiments in stopping an inflation which ended six months ago. There are many other groups who are benefiting from "inflationary" subsidies. The very magazines and newspapers which complain so bitterly about the subsidies to farmers are heavily subsidized through preferential postal rates. Corporations have been subsidized through fantastic tax write-offs in order to stimulate defense production. Yet we hear little editorial complaint about that. Why should the farmer be made the guinea pig for Republican experiments with a free market economy? From their ads in the magazines and the statements of their mouth-pieces it seems reasonable to assume that General Motors or *Time* Inc. would be glad to volunteer instead.

3. Of course, the sliding scale supports have actually not been advocated as anti-inflation measures but rather as means to reduce farm surpluses. This reason is dangerous nonsense. We know, for the record shows it, that falling prices are not means to reduce production. In fact, the farmer who has certain fixed expenses tends to try to make up for the loss in price by an increase in volume. That may not be according to the text-books in

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economics, but many have not read those books but do have fixed expenses that they have to meet regularly.

4. Reduction in farm prices does not seem to affect living costs to any considerable extent. It appears that while the slightest increase in the price of wheat is immediately reflected in the price of bread, even 50% decreases in the price of farm products do not reduce the price to the consumer appreciably. Here in Minnesota we have seen milk prices go down for the farmer and at the same time increase for the consumer.

There must be a solution to the "farm-problem." But it is the almost unanimous opinion of the farm people I know, that Benson's sliding scale isn't it. The slogan around here, as far as Mr. Benson is concerned, is: "Less piety and more parity!"

Yours truly,
GEORGE W. FORRELL,
St. Peter, Minnesota.

Professor Forrell's point is well taken. The problem

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of growing surplus must be dealt with, but the weakness of the Farm Plan is that it singles out the farmers in the de-control of our economy and makes them to bear the brunt alone.—Ed.

Dear Sirs:

We take so much in life for granted. I have been taking *Christianity and Crisis* for granted for a number of years now. I do want to express my appreciation for the fine articles which are presented from month to month. The article by Will Herberg on "Faith and Character Structure" is particularly commendable. It has helped me understand my own situation and many others in our Conference. Please convey to him my deep appreciation. I also look forward to the editorials by R. N.

Again my many thanks.

RALPH ROBINSON,
California, Pa.

Gentlemen:

I have more than a general interest in expressing my gratitude for your publication of Will Herberg's "Faith and Character Structure." Several of us here have been fortunate enough to engage the author for an inter-faith lecture in February at the campus of the University of Connecticut; such an article as this can only whet our appetites.

The contributions of Will Herberg have enriched your paper greatly, and I want to be one of those thanking you and him. Mr. Herberg's application of Reisman to the problem of modern "radar-men" and the Biblical understanding of a living God who judges is an illuminating one.

And it could be one that would make more intelligible to church and campus the "singled-out" Amos and the disturbing Christ.

Sincerely yours,
WAYNE S. UNDERHILL,
Storrs, Ct.

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Author in This Issue

M. M. Thomas is Youth Secretary of the Mar Thoma Church in South India. He has been on the staff of the World Student Christian Federation for six years, and is now at Union Theological Seminary on a World Council fellowship.